



General Assembly

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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from April 2008 to March 2009

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of its resolution 63/109, considered it important to continue and expand its efforts to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization, with particular emphasis on the options of self-determination available for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and, to that end, requested the Department of Public Information to empower the United Nations information centres in the relevant regions to disseminate materials to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In paragraphs 4 and 5 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Department of Public Information to continue its efforts to update Web-based information on the assistance programmes available to the Non-Self-Governing Territories and requested the Department, and the Department of Political Affairs, to continue their efforts to take measures through all the media available, including publications, radio and television, as well as the Internet, to give publicity to the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization. The present report, prepared in response to that mandate, covers the period from April 2008 to March 2009.

2. During the reporting period, the Department of Public Information covered decolonization issues extensively through: press releases in both print and online formats; news stories in the official languages in all areas of its news outputs on the United Nations website; radio; and various publications. The coverage focused on the work of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

3. The Department, working closely with the Department of Political Affairs, deployed a Press Officer from the United Nations Information Service of the



Economic and Social Commission in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok and a national Information Assistant of the United Nations Information Centre in Jakarta to cover the Pacific Regional Seminar on the Implementation of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: Priorities for the Remainder of the Decade, organized by the Special Committee in Bandung, Indonesia, from 14 to 16 May 2008.

II. Coverage of issues before the General Assembly

4. The Department issued a total of 51 press releases on decolonization, in English and French, during the reporting period, covering meetings, statements and hearings of various United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Five press releases were issued on the above-mentioned Pacific regional seminar on decolonization held in Bandung.

5. The topic of decolonization, including the roles of the Trusteeship Council and the Special Committee, was regularly included in the narrative of the guided tours of United Nations Headquarters provided by the Department. The set of maps and text on decolonization, both of which were updated in 2008 to make them more attractive and easier to read, assisted the guides in explaining to the visitors the historical process of decolonization, as well as the locations of the current Non-Self-Governing Territories. The maps were moved to the General Assembly building owing to the change of the tour route associated with the capital master plan. In 2008, more than 300,000 visitors took the guided tour.

6. The Department's Public Inquiries Unit continued to respond to queries from the public concerning decolonization. The Group Programmes Unit arranged briefings for visiting groups on the work of the United Nations, including the role the Organization played in the decolonization process and how decolonization, in turn, impacted its work.

III. United Nations Television and Radio

7. Coverage of issues and activities related to decolonization, including meetings of intergovernmental bodies and the work of United Nations envoys, remained an integral part of the programming produced by the Department's television and radio operations. Among a range of events, United Nations Television covered deliberations of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the General Assembly's consideration of the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee and a meeting of the Security Council on Western Sahara. In addition, decolonization issues were featured in the "UN in Action" television series and highlighted in a report distributed by UNifeed.

8. Throughout the period under review, efforts to advance the decolonization process were also the subject of a series of programmes produced by United Nations Radio. In addition to the regular coverage of meetings of intergovernmental bodies,

United Nations Radio aired an interview with the United Nations Envoy to Western Sahara on his visit to Morocco and Algeria in February 2009. As part of United Nations Radio's coverage of issues related to decolonization, the Chinese Unit produced two features on the work of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

IV. Internet

9. The Internet has emerged as one of the most useful and effective means of transmitting information on decolonization to end-users, including those who reside in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. One user in Cayman Islands has written to the United Nations: "We saw the above contact information online in the book, 'What the United Nations can do to assist Non-Self-Governing Territories'.... The United Nations Decolonization website is a very useful resource tool to us who live in Non-Self Governing Territories.... The website would also be more useful if you had a subscription option advising whenever new information is posted to the website". The Department plans to discuss ways to enhance the decolonization website with the Decolonization Unit of the Department of Political Affairs.

10. Throughout the reporting period, issues and developments related to decolonization were covered regularly on the United Nations News Centre portal, one of the most heavily visited areas on the United Nations website. Articles by the associated United Nations News Service, featuring United Nations decolonization activities, were distributed as e-mail news alerts, in English and French, to over 54,000 subscribers around the world. Those stories were also picked up by an array of external websites, including popular news aggregators. For example, the story covering the Secretary-General's address to the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in February 2009 was carried, among others, by MercoPress, an Uruguay-based news agency covering Mercosur countries, as well as Scoop Independent News, EIN News and Indigenous People's Issues Today.

V. Publications

11. The complete collection of the *Yearbook of the United Nations (1946-2005)*, which is now available on the United Nations website, gives comprehensive coverage to the work of various United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. It also includes general decolonization issues and the situation of individual Non-Self-Governing Territories.

12. The most popular United Nations reference book, *The United Nations Today* (formerly *Basic Facts about the United Nations*), issued in English, French and Spanish, devotes an entire chapter (chapter 7) to the issue of decolonization, illustrating the historical role of the Organization in the decolonization process, as well as its current efforts in this regard. The publication, *Sixty Ways the United Nations Makes a Difference*, available in all official languages on the Web and as a

downloadable PDF publication, highlights the role of the United Nations in promoting self-determination and independence. In its coverage of the General Assembly, the *UN Chronicle Online* reported on the meetings of the Fourth Committee in 2008, which included its discussion and debate on the subject of decolonization.

VI. United Nations information centres and services

13. During the reporting period, the United Nations Information Service in Geneva issued press releases by human rights experts on the issue of decolonization and produced summaries of meetings where the subject was discussed, in particular in the context of country reviews undertaken by the human rights treaty bodies and during meetings of the Human Rights Council. The topic of decolonization was also addressed during the service's biweekly news briefing. Decolonization and the role of the Trusteeship Council were included in the Service's guided tour of the Palais des Nations, as well as in the information programmes organized by the Service for visiting groups. Approximately 100,000 visitors took the guided tour in 2008.

14. The United Nations Information Service in Vienna disseminated information on decolonization to non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, universities and other educational institutions in Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia, and addressed the issue through the Service's programme of lectures and seminars on the work of the United Nations.

15. The United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels addressed the issue of decolonization in speeches and lectures given by its staff and in response to public inquiries. For example, press releases and news features on Western Sahara were translated into Portuguese and disseminated to Lusophone countries. Reports of the Secretary-General on the subject are regularly shared with requestors, including from the European Union institutions.

16. The United Nations Association of South Africa invited the National Information Officer of the United Nations Information Centre in Pretoria to be a panellist at a model United Nations debate on the "Crisis in Western Sahara" as part of its programme for 2008. The participants, second-year international relations students at the University of Pretoria, took part in this programme as a compulsory activity for their course.